

## **Press Release**

The Board of Dental Examiners (Board) recognizes that misuse of and addiction to opioids is a serious and challenging public health problem. The Board also recognizes that principles of quality dental practice dictate that the people of New Hampshire have access to appropriate and effective pain treatment. Controlled substances, including opioid analgesics may, at times, be an essential component of this treatment. The dental management of pain should be based on the most current knowledge and research, and with an understanding of the unique risks associated with opioids. The Board is committed to implementing opioid prescribing rules that will allow licensees to provide the best possible care to patients while preventing the diversion of drugs for illegitimate purposes. The Board agrees with Governor Hassan that New Hampshire practitioners need appropriate tools to combat the public health crisis facing New Hampshire.

On January 5, 2016, the Board took steps to revise its rules in order to ensure patients and providers are knowledgeable about the risks of opioid use and acceptable prescribing practices. The Board voted to adopt specific emergency rules.

The Board recognizes that reversing the trend of opioid misuse and abuse requires coordinated efforts to increase public awareness, take-back events for safe disposal, and addiction treatment and recovery options. The Board further recognizes that decreasing opioid misuse and abuse should be addressed by collaborative and constructive policies aimed at improving prescriber education and practice, decreasing diversion, and establishing the same protocols for all opioid prescribers.

The emergency rules require the following:

- Adherence to the principles in the New Hampshire Dental Society's Opioids in the Dental Practice Guidelines for New Hampshire Dentists.
- Adherence to the guidelines in the Federation of State Medical Boards Model Policy on the Use of Opioid Analgesics in the Treatment of Chronic Pain, July 2013. A link to this document is available on the Board's website.
- The use of an informed consent for chronic pain patients. Links to sample informed consent forms are available on the Board's website.
- The use of a risk assessment tool for chronic pain patients. A link to a sample assessment can be found on the Board's website.
- The provision of educational information to acute pain patients which includes instructions on proper disposal of unused opioids.

The new emergency rules also mandate, when treating chronic pain patients, a written pain agreement and toxicology screening.

The Board recognizes that use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) is critical in the treatment of pain. Prescribers are urged to use this potentially life-saving tool.

Prescribers are also urged to use a morphine equivalent dose calculator as part of their pain treatment. This tool will be available on the Board's website. Prescribers should be aware that a higher daily dose of opioids is associated with increases in opioid related mortality. Prescribers should use extra caution when prescribing opioids in excess of 100 mg.

Prescribers should also use extreme caution in prescribing opioids to patients who are taking Benzodiazepines. The combination of these drugs is another risk factor for increased opioid related mortality.

The Board appreciates the assistance of the Governor's Office and the Department of Justice and is committed to working with stakeholders and the public to improve opioid prescribing practices in our state. The Board is likewise committed to fulfilling its mission to protect all citizens of New Hampshire by implementing rulemaking founded upon best science and evidence based practice and allows for public scrutiny.

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